

THE
BAPTISM
OF
INFANTS
A
REASONABLE SERVICE;

Founded upon SCRIPTURE and undoubted
APOSTOLIC TRADITION:

In which
Its MORAL PURPOSES and USES in RELIGION
are shewn.

Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not;
for of such is the kingdom of God. MARK x. 14.

By the AUTHOR of the Dissenting Gentleman's
Answer to the Rev. Mr. WHITE's three Letters.

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P R E F A C E.

THE undue and superstitious stress, which has been laid upon BAPTISING INFANTS, by some ill instructed Christians; has, doubtless, been the chief occasion of its being treated with such unreasonable opposition by others.

When we hear Austin, Fulgentius, Gregory—and many others of great name, amongst those called the holy fathers, with solemnity pronouncing—"That infants can have no salvation, if they die without baptism."— "That we must hold for certain and undoubted that they are *ignis eterni sempiterno supplicio puniendi*, to be tormented with the everlasting punishment of eternal fire."—"And, *interminabilia gehenna sustinere supplicia, ubi diabolus, &c.* That they suffer the endless torments of hell, where the devil with his angels are to burn for evermore."—Again, "As the UNBAPTISED INFANT cannot go into the kingdom of heaven, you must acknowledge he will be in everlasting fire.—Finally,—" If Infants have not had the sacrament of salvation (*i. e. Baptism*) for their deliverance from original sin, they pass into perpetual torments."—When we hear, I say, this ceremony of baptismal-water exalted into an affair of such infinite importance, the mind is naturally shocked: it rises with indignation against the monstrous absurdity and even impiety of such tenets; and (which is but too common to human nature) the transports of zeal hurry it into

the opposite extreme : to depreciate and run down, a rite so unduly magnified : and, whilst pulling it from the high rank it had usurped in religion, to cast it quite out ; and to allow it no use nor place in it at all.

The middle-way betwixt these two extremes, is that which is here chosen. It can with no reason be imagined, that a GOD of infinite mercy, who hateth nothing that he hath made, will permit the having, or the wanting, the ceremony of baptismal water, to determine finally and irrevocably the everlasting state of a dying infant : or, that for the neglect of this ceremonial washing, (which yet the Infant could in no wise help) it shall be doomed to everlasting torments amongst devils and apostate spirits. This be far from the almighty Judge !

The Baptism that saves, * (or, that at all profits any, whether Infant or Adult) is not the external washing, but the answer of a good conscience ; or the pious and devout sentiments with which that ceremony is performed. In persons adult ; the religious and sincere affections with which they consecrate themselves to GOD : and in Infants ; the unfeigned piety, the gratitude and the faith, with which their parents devote them to him. The meer ceremony of applying water is comparatively of little moment.

But, that the Baptism of Infants is a rite ordained of GOD, and a rite of great advantage and use in religion, the following treatise, it is hoped, will show. In which it is considered, rather as a standing token, than as a proper instrument or mean, of GOD's mercy and grace to us ; a perpetual memorial instituted in the church, signifying to believers GOD's readiness to pour down his spirit upon them, and his blessing upon their offspring ; not properly a canal (as some affect to talk) by which these are conveyed to us.

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* I Pet. iii. 21.

The argument from antiquity or apostolic tradition, has not, perhaps, been often presented to the public, in so contracted and clear a light as its importance deserves. It is, principally for the sake of this; and to represent the moral purposes of Infant-Baptism, that the ensuing tract appears.

If sentiments, on the future state of dying infants, may here be thought by some, too freely expressed; they may, —it is hoped, be admitted as conjectures at least, upon an interesting subject; upon which however the baptism of infants has no essential dependance, that resting securely upon other considerations, whatever force be allowed to these.

The author delights not in controversy, nor intends to engage in any, on the subject of these papers; having seldom seen good arising from altercations of this kind. But the light in which the argument is here set having been approved by several, to whose judgment he owes great deference, it is here presented to publick view. As far as it speaks truth, may the God of truth succeed it! To his favour it is commended: and to the attentive perusal of the candid and sincere.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

A general view of the several dispensations of Religion with respect to INFANTS.

FROM the exactest observations, it appears, that of those who are born into the world, scarce a third part attain to the age even of one year. *Thousands of INFANTS* every day languish under grievous distempers; are tortured, convulsed, and in piteous agonies give up the ghost.—This, at first, seems a very *strange dispensation*; hardly reconcileable with the *wisdom* and *justice*, much less with the *goodness* and *mercy* of *God*. It is scarce possible not to ask—how comes it to pass, that millions of harmless babes, in whose frame is displayed such infinite skill; who are formed with *capacities* of such exalted attainments, both *intellectual* and *moral*; with *capacities* of an *happiness ever-growing*, and *everlasting*, in the knowledge, imitation, and enjoyment of *God*.—How comes it to pass, that they only thus glance upon the coasts of life; are just brought into the world with exquisite pains, moan away a few weeks of misery and disease upon it, and then in terrible convulsions, fall victims to death! What *light* has *God* cast upon this *dark scene* of his providence? Has he left it quite covered with impenetrable clouds? And, where the interest and comfort of so great a part of his *intelligent creation* are deeply concerned, has he given no intimations which may be a solid ground of *hope*? It can never be supposed.

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The Introduction.

There are four dispensations, under which RELIGION has principally subsisted since the fall, viz. the dispensation of the *Light of Nature*, the *Abrahamic*, the *Mosaic*, and the *Christian*. Now, each of these casts some light upon this awful scene; and administers some hope as to suffering and dying Infants. Let it then be enquired

FIRST. What judgment doth REASON, or the *Light of Nature*, pass upon their case? There are but two ways, in which REASON can account for this procedure of providence, viz. by supposing these suffering Infants to have existed in some former state; or that they will exist in some future.

Some have imagined, that they have existed and misbehaved in a former state of being; and that their sufferings in the present, are a correction or punishment for evils done there. This the Platonic philosophy taught: and it seems to have been an opinion not uncommon amongst the Jews, in the days of our Saviour. Concerning the man that was born blind, the disciples, therefore, ask him—master who did sin; this man, or his parents; that he was born blind.* But this pre-existence of Infants, being a matter of absolute uncertainty; unsupported by any solid or probable grounds; REASON derives its principal satisfaction from the supposition of their existence in a state after death. There, the Almighty RECTOR can give them pleasures and entertainments abundantly to counterbalance the sufferings of their present state.

This is what REASON, I say, surmises and hopes; but cannot certainly conclude. It wants some REVELATION, some promise from GOD, to give stability and vigor to these wavering hopes. And under all the conflicts and pains which he sees his dying child suffer, the pious parent has nothing, from the *Light of Nature*, whereon to trust, but the uncovenanted goodness and

mercy

* John ix. 2.

mercy of God. Now, were it not, in these circumstances, a most desirable thing, that God would give us some revelation or promise concerning our INFANTS? Some covenant to assure us, that they are the objects of his favour and peculiar regard; and that as they suffer and die in this world, so they shall be raised again to life and happiness in the other? Was not, I ask some such covenant, revelation, or promise, concerning our INFANTS, what nature greatly wanted, wished for and desired; and if God should be pleased to grant it, ought it not to be highly valued, and most thankfully received? + Behold!

Secondly. This we see done in the ABRAHAMIC dispensation. For as God's covenant-transactions with Abraham were the foundation, or charter of the church, which, in after ages, he intended to gather, and to erect amongst men: so he, here, gives pious parents an express promise and revelation concerning their INFANTS.

B

FANTS.

+ There is a very rational and just sense, in which God may be said to establish his covenant with INFANTS. For the scripture expressly says, Gen. ix. 9, 10, 12, 13. that he established his covenant, even, with the cattle and the fowl; solemnly engaging no more to drown them by a flood. Is there any thing strange, then, or unreasonable, in God's establishing his covenant with Infants; solemnly engaging to pour his spirit and blessing upon them? Or, that the evils they suffer in consequence of Adam's sin, shall be removed and amply recompensed through the righteousness of Christ? Most surely not at all.—

But, if there is a rational and just sense, in which God may establish his covenant with INFANTS; there is the highest reason to presume that he actually has done it, and that they are taken into his covenant: for if he graciously condescended to establish his covenant with the brute creation, promising no more to deluge them; and appointed a standing token or memorial of this covenant, viz. the bow in the clouds; much more, surely, may we hope, that he hath established his covenant also with INFANTS, promising to deliver them from the fatal consequences of the fall; and that he hath appointed a standing token or sign of this covenant, to perpetuate its knowledge and remembrance in the church.

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INFANTS. He promises to be a GOD to Abraham, and to his seed ; and takes his INFANTS into covenant, together with himself ; commanding the TOKEN of the covenant to be solemnly affixed to them, as a standing testimony or sign that JEHOVAH was their GOD. See Gen. xvii. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14. GOD said, I will establish my covenant between me, and thee (Abraham) and thy seed after thee, in their generations ; to be a GOD to thee, and to thy seed after thee—and I will be THEIR GOD. This is my covenant which ye shall keep—every man-child among you that is eight days old, shall be circumcised. The uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people. Circumcision then, by God's express command, was affixed to Abraham's INFANTS, and to the INFANTS of all such as believed in the GOD of Abraham, as a TOKEN of his covenant ; which covenant was, that JEHOVAH would be their GOD.

Now, when the ALMIGHTY covenants and promises to be THE GOD of these Infants, what does it imply ? Undoubtedly something GREAT, viz. that he will be, in a peculiar manner, their guardian and benefactor ; that he will take them under the especial patronage and care of his providence, influences of his spirit, and ministration of his angels ; and that if they died in their infant-state, before any transgression had put them out of the covenant, they should certainly be raised to an happiness after death.—That this was the undoubted import or meaning of this promise, the scripture hath clearly taught us—Now that the dead are raised, Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the GOD of Abraham and THE GOD of Isaac,* &c. And again, GOD is not ashamed to be called THEIR GOD ; for

* Luke xx. 37. A state of death is a state of punishment ; God's calling himself then, the GOD of Abraham, when he lay in a state of death, was a clear proof that he would not leave him always to continue in it.

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for he bath prepared for them a city, † i. e. an happiness in some future state. And again, *I will be his God,* is explained by, *he shall be my Son:* but, whoever is a son of God, and dies in that relation, will infallibly be declared or manifested to be such by a glorious resurrection. See Rom. viii. 19. Luke xx. 36.

That this token of the *Abrahamic covenant*, assured a resurrection to future happiness to an *Infant* dying under it, may be further proved thus—suppose one of Abraham's circumcised Infants lay languishing under tormenting pains, and gave up the ghost. An *infidel* stands by, and seeing the MARK in its flesh, scoffingly asks—what *that MARK means?* He is told, it is a TOKEN of the covenant into which JEHOVAH took the child; and by which he solemnly declared, that he received it as his own, and engaged to be its God. But what gets the child, the *Infidel* demands, by having JEHOVAH for its God? Is he not ashamed to be called THE GOD of that emaciated, tortured, breathless Infant? No, it is replied, because he will raise it from the dead, and give it happiness in a future state. Else, indeed, he would be ashamed to be called THE GOD of such a babe. But we proceed to consider

Thirdly. The MOSAIC dispensation; and the farther strength which this gives to these rational hopes. Now, here, we see another COVENANT, besides that of circumcision, into which INFANTS were taken. Deut. xxix. 10, 11, 12. *Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your captains, your elders, your little-ones, your wives, that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God: that he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself; and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, &c.*—So Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. *Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons,*

B 2

and

† Heb. xi. 16.

† Rev. xxi. 7.

*and thy daughters, which thou hast born unto me ; and these hast thou sacrificed unto the Idols : thou hast slain my children.** Thus our LORD himself, when an *Infant*, was brought into the *Temple*, as were all the first-born *Infant-Males*, and there solemnly devoted, as *HOLY*, to *GOD*. Luke ii. 22, 23.—Hence then, it is most evident, that the *Jewish INFANTS*, in consequence of their dedication to God, and admission into his covenant, were in a peculiar manner *HIS*; his property, and his children, in a sense in which the *Infants* of the idolatrous and uncircumcised *Gentiles* were not. But of these, multitudes, no doubt, died in their *Infant state*. What now might be concluded concerning the case of such? Undoubtedly this: That, as they died in covenant with *God*, by which covenant, he had engaged to take them for a people to himself, to acknowledge them as his children, and to be to them a *God*) and as no *advantage* nor *happiness* was given them in this world, at all answerable to these characters; but they miserably languished, like all other Infants, and at last died under the primitive condemnation or judgment; it therefore certainly remained, that they will be raised again and exist in some *after state*; where an *happiness* will be given them suitable to these great promises, and where they will be treated as the *people* and the *children of God*. For else, *God* would plainly seem to have broken his covenant; and the solemn and grand promise of being a *God* to such an *Infant*, and of taking it for *His child*, proves a very mean and insignificant thing.

These are the *hopes* which *Reason* surmises, and which the several dispensations both of *Abraham*, and of *Moses*, strongly confirm. We proceed to observe

Fourthly,

* A child, on the day of its circumcision, was wont to be called *Chatan*, because it was then considered as espoused to *God*, and united to his people. Vid. Schindler Verb. Lexic. Pent. pag. 677.

Fourthly. How they are farther brightned by the dispensation of Jesus Christ. As this was to be the last, and the most perfect display of God's mercy to fallen men; in which the riches of his abounding grace were to be most fully revealed; it can never be imagined to come short, in any points of the two former dispensations, Did God take the Infants of believers into covenant with himself, under Abraham and Moses; and command, that as a standing token of it, the seal of the covenant should be solemnly affixed to them; but, under Jesus his Son, has he made no such manifestation, of his merciful regard to them; admitted them visibly into no covenant; nor appointed any token that he receives them as his children, and that he will be to them a God? How utterly unlikely, as well as uncomfortable is the thought. Thanks to his mercy! We can with good assurance say, that is not the case.—

No. But when Infants were once brought to our Saviour, to be made partakers of the blessings of his kingdom; he openly and severely rebuked his Disciples, and was highly displeased with them, for endeavouring to hinder it. He kindly took them into his arms; laid his hands upon them; and blessed them; and commanded that little Children should be suffered to come, i. e. be brought, to him, and not be forbidden; declaring that of such is the kingdom of God, * i. e. that these, also, have a place in the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now to be set up; and a right to the blessings which himself, the promised King, was come to bestow.

At another time, he took a little Child into his arms, and shewing it to his Disciples, says, whosoever shall receive one such little Child, this Child, in my name, receiveth me. † Now the receiving a Child in Christ's name must mean the considering, or treating,

* Mat. xix. 14.

Mark x. 14.

Luke xviii. 16.

† Mat. xviii. 5.

Mark ix. 37.

Luke ix. 48.

it as standing in some peculiar relation to Christ ; as ~~TOUCH~~ ~~TO~~ ~~ON~~ ~~CHRIST~~ ~~ON~~, belonging to Christ ; as being a subject of his kingdom, or a part of his flock. That this is what our Lord means by, *receiving in his name*, himself has expressly shewn by thus explaining it in this same discourse, *because ye belong to Christ* : * *who so shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, &c.* Hence, then it is most evident, that *Infants* may be, yea are to be, *received in Christ's name* ; and that by this we are to understand, receiving them as *belonging* or *standing* in some *peculiar relation*, to Christ ; but in this peculiar relation to Christ an *Infant* can no otherwise stand than by being *solemnly devoted* to him, and *admitted into* his kingdom and church.

And, that *Infants* were to be admitted into the kingdom of the Messiah, or into that *incorporated society* of which he is the *head*, is quite rational to presume ; for as they stood in absolute need of the redemption or grace which Messiah, the king, came to bestow on mankind ; and as provision was made by the covenant of God for their *actual* receiving it ; so there was the strongest reason to expect, that they would be *solemnly acknowledged*, and *declared* to be a part of that society or church which should be thus *blessed* and *saved* by him. In other words, that as they were *condemned* through the *first Adam* and treated as *sinners*, so they should be *justified* through the *second Adam* and treated as *righteous*. But, if they were to be treated as *righteous*, and to be *solemnly declared* a part of that society, or church, whom Christ came to save ; they were, then, *to be baptized* ; for baptism was the *ceremony* in which all, who by God's *covenant* had a right to *salvation*, were to be admitted into the church, and *solemnly declared* to be of the number of *the saved*.

That,

* *Mark ix. 41.*

That in the eye of the *christian law*, Infants are actually under a *sentence of condemnation* and considered as sinners, by being made to suffer death the punishment and effect of sin, cannot be denied. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon ALL, for that (EPH' 0, ad quod, as far as which) or (per quem through whom) ALL are treated as if they had sinned.* Rom. v. 12. By one man's offence judgment came upon ALL men to condemnation. ver. 18. By one man's offence many were made sinners. ver. 19. In Adam ALL die. 1 Cor. xv. 22.* Though Infants are incapable of any moral or proper guilt, yet as in the wise scheme of God's providence they are at present subjected to innumerable pains, diseases, sickness and death, the penal effects of *sin*, through the disobedience of Adam; they are, agreeably to the style of scripture, said to have sinned, and to be made, i. e. treated as, sinners.

Now, the same discourse of the Apostle, which represents them as *condemned and suffering through Adam*, represents them also as *justified and saved by Jesus Christ*. For, *as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (Christ) the free gift came upon all men to justification of life; for as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.* ¶ As much as to say, the salutary effects of the second Adam's virtue, are as extensive as the penal ones of the first Adam's sin: or, as the malignity of that first offence reached even to Infants, subjecting them to death; so the benefit of Christ's obedience reaches also to infants, justifying, absolving, and

* *Iniquity and sin are very frequently used in scripture, where not any real guilt or moral turpitude is meant, but only the effects or the punishment of sin.* See Gen. xix. 15. 1 Sam. xxviii. 10. 2 Kin. vii. 9. Isa. liii. 6, 11, 12. 1 Pet. ii. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. Heb. ix. 28.

† Rom. v. 18, 19.

restoring them to life. It procures for and gives to them that *Spirit of life*, which releases and sets them free from the *law of sin and death*. Now of God's giving, and of men's receiving this *life-giving SPIRIT*, the *baptismal water* is the appointed *token*, or *emblem*, in the church.

This the scripture plainly intimates, by saying, Tit. iii. 5. We are *SAVED*, by the *washing of regeneration*, (i. e. *Baptism*, the sign) and by the *renewing of the HOLY GHOST* (the thing signified in that ceremonial washing) which he hath *shed*. (*EXEKEEN*, poured out) upon us abundantly, through *Jesus Christ our Lord*.

From this discourse of the Apostle (*Rom. v.*) the following deductions evidently flow. 1. That in the construction of the Christian Law, *Infants* are, most certainly, in a state of *condemnation*, and treated as sinners. 2. That they are, therefore, *capable* of *justification* or *remission*, and stand in *absolute need* of it; in as much as, without it, they must eternally lie under the sentence of *death*. 3. As they are *capable* of this grace, and stand in *absolute need* of it; express provision is made, in the constitution of the *gospel-covenant*, for their being *justified* and *saved*. But 4. All who by the *gospel covenant* are entitled to *justification*, *salvation*, and *life*, are entitled also to *baptism*; for *baptism* is a rite, instituted by *God*, to signify or betoken that those, who are entitled to the *blessings* of his covenant, shall certainly receive them.

The *Baptism of Infants*, viewed in this light, is a very rational institution. The great *Parent* of mankind having in the wisdom of his providence, subjected so vast a part of the race to miseries and pains through no default of their own; it was quite reasonable to believe, that his *mercy* would appoint them some *testimony* of his favour, some *monument* or *pledge* that he had not abandoned this noble part of his creation to the *ruin*

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and death under which they were fallen. That, as they continually suffered the *visible tokens* of his displeasure in a variety of tormenting agonies; so, he would graciously ordain them also some *visible token* of his goodwill, some perpetual and standing *sign*, of his still accounting them *his children*, and that they were yet the objects of his tender and parental regard. It was perfectly just, I say, and reasonable to imagine, that the great *Parent* of these tortured and suffering *innocents*, whenever he erected a *church* upon earth, would appoint some such *standing token* of his mercy and favour to them. Now this, we see, he did under the *two former dispensations*, both of Abraham and of Moses: and great consolation it, doubtless, gave their pious parents under these dispensations, when they saw them languishing in extreme pains and giving up the ghost, to reflect upon the *solemn token* by which the Almighty had accepted them as *his children*, and had promised to be *their God*. But, can it ever be conceived, that the dispensation of Jesus Christ is *defective* in this important point! That it, herein, comes behind, and is inferior to both the former! That it has no such *standing token* of God's mercy to condemned Infants, nor any *rite* by which he visibly admits them *now*, as he *formerly* did, into his family or church!—Is he a *God in covenant* to the *Abrahamic* and to the *Jewish Infants only*, and not to *Christian Infants* also? With great assurance we can say, to *Christian Infants* also.*

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And

* We are not to imagine, that all *Infants* dying such, but those of *believers*, or all which die unbaptized, will be *annihilated* or never rise again; but the superior advantage to *believers Infants*, above others, is, 1. That with respect to these, God has been pleased to lay himself under a more particular *covenant* or *promise* of a resurrection to a future happiness; whereas the other are left more to his *uncovenanted mercy*. And 2. Their circumstances in a *future state* may agreeably to all the moral perfections

And as it thus evidently appears, that, in the original construction and frame of *his church*, provision was made that the Infants of God's people should be admitted into his *covenant*. So, it may be added—that such a *solemn dedication*, as is made in Baptism, of an Infant by its parents to God the Supreme Parent, seems to be a most *natural* and *rational* service : a service which a pious mind can scarce possibly forbear. Having received so great a gift and trust from the *almighty sovereign*, how natural and proper is it, that soon upon its birth, and while a sense of the obligation is yet warm upon the heart, he should make some *solemn acknowledgment*

tions of God, be supposed more *happy* and *advantageous* than theirs who were never thus *solemnly devoted* to him. It being an evident and important part of the scheme of God's moral government, that great blessings and favours shall be conferred upon *some*, in consequence and as a reward of the earnest and sincere prayers and piety of *others*. The *light of nature* itself seems plainly to have taught this. It was the custom of the Romans, on the ninth day from the child's birth (which was called the *lustrical*, or the day of *purification*) for its friends and relations to bring it to the temple, and before the altars of the gods, to recommend it to the protection of some tutelar deity. *Middleton's life of Cicero*. Vol. I. p. 6. A ceremony of the same nature also was performed among the Greeks.

All *rational* creatures, there is reason to believe, are, some where or other, placed in a state of *discipline* or *probation*, before they pass into a state of *fixed* and *unalterable* bliss. Heaven itself was, if it be not at present, a state of *trial* to Angels. Infants dying such, therefore, there is ground to presume, pass into such a state. Now, as in our present state of trial, some are placed in circumstances far more *advantageous* and *favourable* than others : so, probably, is it in the state to which dying Infants pass. Abraham's posterity were put in circumstances more *favourable*, for attaining *virtue* and *happiness*, than other nations of the earth, on account of their father's piety. The same may be justly hoped as to the dying Infants of good men ; who, according to God's command, have been *solemnly devoted* to him, whom he hath acknowledged for his *children*, and to whom he hath, by a sacred covenant, promised to be a God.

acknowledgment that he has received it from God; should openly devote it to him, and lay himself under a sacred vow to educate it religiously, and bring it up in his fear! Is not this, evidently, a becoming temper and action, upon receiving such a trust? Would it not naturally have a good influence on the conduct of the parent, with regard to his child; disposing him either to resign it more cheerfully, if taken from him by death; or to train it up more religiously if its life be continued? And might it not be hoped, that God would graciously accept and reward the piety of such a parent, with peculiar blessings on such a child?

But, from this general view of the several dispensations of religion with respect to Infants, from which their right to *Baptism* may be strongly presumed.— We proceed farther to establish it by clear and direct proofs.

ARGUMENT I.

The first argument shall be presented under the following propositions.

I. IT is an incontestible fact, that the Infants of believers, were, in former dispensations or ages of the church, taken together with their parents into covenant with God; and had, by his express command, a sacrament or rite given them as a token that JEHOVAH was their GOD; and that in consequence hereof, he counted them for his children, and as standing in a peculiar relation to himself, Gen. xvii, 7, 10, 11, 12. Deut. xxix. 10, 11, 12. Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. See these scripture already cited, pag. 4, 6.

II. When

II. When these Infants of believers were thus taken into covenant, it was certainly, a great privilege, a favour or grant most thankfully to be received.

For, by this token, the Most High obliged himself and covenanted to be the God of that Infant. And what that implies, see before explained, pag. 4, 5. Now,

III. If this great privilege was once granted by God to his church, it is a privilege still subsisting, and is now in actual and full force, if it has not been revoked. But,

IV. This privilege or grant has never been revoked. No such revocation, nor any shadow of it, appears in the whole book of God. Therefore,

V. The Infants of believers having still a right to their antient unrepealed privilege, of being admitted with their parents into covenant with God, and of having its token applied to them; it hence necessarily follows, that they have right to Christian Baptism; for Baptism is now the ONLY appointed token or ceremony of admission.

These propositions, it is humbly apprehended, amount to a demonstration of the point in debate. Which of them can be denied? Will any man say. 1. That the Infants of believers, in the former ages of the church, were not taken, with their parents into covenant with God; had not, by his express command, a sacrament or rite given them in token that Jehovah was their God; and that, in consequence of this, they were not considered and treated as being in a peculiar manner his? This no man will affirm. Will it then be said, 2. That this, though it was granted to the Infants of good men of old, was really no privilege nor favour to them? Neither durst any man assert this. Can it be urged then, 3. That this privilege, though granted antiently to the church, and enjoyed by it many ages, does not, now, continue to it; nor ought, now, to be enjoyed by it; though it be at the same time acknowledged not to have been

been repealed? Absurd to imagine! Will it be said then, 4. That this antient privilege or grant has, indeed, been repealed? Let the *Repeal* be shewn, and the point shall be given up. There appears no such *Repeal*, nor any thing like it, in the whole sacred scriptures: on the contrary, there appear many things, as will presently be seen, abundantly to *confirm* this invaluable privilege; and to *strengthen* and *enlarge* it. And, indeed, it were the height of *absurdity* to imagine, that Jesus Christ came to *cut short* the privileges of the church, in any single point; and to cast the *children of believers* out of God's covenant, who *before* were taken into it.—

It being impossible to deny, then, that the *Infants of believers* have still a right to their *antient unrepealed privilege*, of being admitted with their parents into God's covenant, and of having its *token* applied to them.—The consequence is inevitable.—That they have then a right to *Baptism*, the *appointed token* of God's covenant, and the *only initiatory rite* by which persons are now admitted into it.

The point is farther proved thus,

ARGUMENT II.

From the Abrahamic Covenant.

THE covenant which God made with *Abraham*, and with his *Seed*, Gen. xvii. (into which his Infants were taken, together with himself, by the rite of circumcision.) That covenant, I say, is the very same which we are now under, even the christian or gospel covenant; and Abraham, in that transaction,
acted

acted and is considered as *our Father*, the father of *us* believing Gentiles: the original grants, therefore, and privileges of that covenant must necessarily belong to *us*, believing Gentiles, *his Seed*.—Now it was an indisputable grant or privilege of that covenant, that *Infants* should be received, together with their parents, into it; and solemnly pass under its sacrament or seal. This grant, therefore, or privilege, in behalf of *our Infants*, we, believing Gentiles, may now confidently claim.

That *we*, believing Gentiles, are the *Seed* really included and intended in that covenant; and that Abraham, in that transaction, was considered as *our Father*—is a point actually, and most clearly, determined by St. Paul. For in two several epistles (Rom. iv. and Gal. iii.) where he is explaining the nature and extent of the christian or gospel covenant, he quotes *this covenant* made with Abraham (Gen. xvii.) refers to it, and reasons it, and fetches arguments thence to prove, that Believers from among the Gentiles are, under the christian dispensation, to be fellow-heirs with the Jews, and are the *real Seed* of Abraham intended in that covenant. See Rom. iv. 9.—particularly ver. 16, 17. Therefore IT (i. e. the blessedness, or justification, of the **Abrahamic covenant**) is of Faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the Promise might be sure to all the Seed; not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the Faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us ALL, (i. e. of believing Gentiles as well as Jews,) as it is written (Gen. xvii. 5.) I have made thee a Father of many Nations.

Expressly to the same purpose, the apostle also assures us, Gal. iii. 7. That they who are of Faith (Believers) the same are the Children of Abraham. And ver. 29. If ye are Christ's (i. e. Believers) then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs according to the promise. And again ver. 16, 17. that to Abraham, and to his Seed, were

the promises made ; (which Seed he proves to be all true believers, taken in a collective sense as the body of Christ ; and adds) now this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ ; (EIS CHRISTON respecting Christ, or true believers) the Law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the Promise of no Effect.—Now that the promises, or covenant, here referred to, which the apostle affirms to be still in force, and not to be disannulled, must be, and is this covenant, (Gen. xvii.) into which Infants were taken by a visible rite, is most evident ; because, this is the only covenant, in which God ever made and confirmed promises to Abraham and to his seed.

Seeing, then, it is incontestable—that we believing Gentiles, are the seed intended in that covenant : it follows, that we have an undoubted right to all its privileges and grants ; consequently, to the admission of our Infants into it ; and consequently, to their passing under its token or sign.

This token or sign was originally circumcision : but when God sent his Son into the world further to explain and confirm this covenant, and to publish it to all nations, he was pleased to alter its token, or initiating rite, from circumcision to baptism : partly, perhaps, as circumcision was a painful and bloody rite, and obnoxious to great reproach and contempt amongst the Gentiles ; but, principally, because both sexes were now to be alike visibly received into the covenant ; and under this new dispensation of it, there was to be neither male nor female. Gal. iii. 28.* Thus

* That circumcision is abolished, is acknowledged by all ; but the Abrahamic covenant still subsisting, and being no other than the gospel covenant, and of this gospel covenant it being acknowledged that Baptism is now the appointed token or sign ; it hence evidently follows, that Baptism now succeeds in the room of circumcision. Accordingly it is called the christian circumcision, or circumcision of Christ. Col. ii. 11, 12.

Thus then stands the argument, in short—if we are Christ's (believers) then are we Abraham's seed, (Gal. iii. 29.) but, if we are Abraham's *seed*, we have then a right to *all* the grants and privileges of that covenant which God made with Abraham, and with his *seed*; but the admission of his Infants, together with himself, was an indisputable grant or privilege of that covenant: therefore, as it was given to Abraham our father, it must necessarily remain and endure to us his *seed*. †

ARGUMENT III.

From the Commission.

A Third argument for admitting Infants to Baptism, may be drawn—from the sense in which the Apostles, when sent forth to baptise, would naturally and even necessarily understand their commission. Go teach (MATTHEUS ATE, disciple or proselyte) all nations, baptizing them.* It is now enquired, in what sense they would understand this commission? Whether, as authorizing them to baptise only the believing adult: or, to give this token of God's covenant also to the Infants of such believers? The commission is delivered

† Infants are not baptised as being THEMSELVES the Seed of Abraham; but as being the Children or Property, of those who are the Seed of Abraham. For as Abraham's Faith brought not himself only, but his Infants together with him, into the Covenant of God: So the Faith of Abraham's Seed (Believers) brings not themselves only, but their Infants together with them, into the same Covenant; else the Covenant would not be established in the same manner to his Seed, as it was to Abraham himself; which yet is plainly promised, Gen. xvii. 7, 10, 11.

* Mat. xxviii. 19.

livered in such general terms as not certainly to determine this. If any part of it can be said to exclude Infants, it must be the word *teach*.† But suppose it had been said—*go teach, proselyte, all nations circumcising them*.—Would not the Apostles, without any farther warrant, have naturally and justly thought, that upon proselyting the *Gentile parent* and circumcising him, his *Infants also* were to be circumcised? Or, if a divine command had been given to the *twelve patriarchs* of old, to go into *Egypt, Arabia, &c.* and teach *them the God of Abraham, circumcising them*.—Would they not, must they not, have understood it as authorizing them to perform this ceremony, not upon the *parent* only but also upon the *Infants* of such as believed in the *God of Abraham*? Without all question they would.

Hence then it is plain, that the word, *teach*, (disciple or proselyte) concludes nothing, *certainly*, against *Infants being admitted*, with their believing parents, into God's covenant by baptism. But, if the word, *teach*, does not necessarily *exclude Infants*; let us see, whether there are not such circumstances attending this commission, as would naturally and even necessarily lead the Apostles to apprehend *Infants* to be actually *included* therein.

Now, here let it be considered—*who* the persons were, to whom the commission was given? They were *Jews*; men, who had been educated in the knowledge of that covenant, which God had made with Abraham and their fathers; and who knew it to be *still* in force.—Men, who had seen, that in all covenant-transactions betwixt God and his church, the *Infants* of believers

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† The word rendered *teach* (*MATHETEUATE*) in the 19th verse, is not the same with that in the next verse, *teaching them to observe all things*—(*DIDASCONTE*s) but is of a more large and comprehensive signification, and is better rendered to *proselyte* or *disciple*.

had always been admitted, together with their parents, and passed under the same initiating rite.—Men, who apprehended this their admission to be a great privilege or favour to them; and knew, or were to be soon informed, that the Gentiles (all nations) were now to be taken into a joint-participation of *all* the privileges of the Jewish church; to be grafted into the same olive tree; and to be joint-heirs with them of *all* their religious immunities or grants.—They, moreover, knew it to be the constant, immemorial practice of the church, that when any Gentile was taught (proselyted to the worship of the God of Israel) himself was baptised, and all his Infants were baptised with him, and these Infants were called proselytes. Further, they were men extremely jealous and tenacious of their ancient rites.—They had seen also, under their law, by God's express command, children of a month old and upwards enrolled in the temple register; and entered, as ministers to Aaron, as *doing the service of the tabernacle*, and as *keeping the charge of the sanctuary*.* They had been, often, witnesses to the kind regard their master had shewn to little children; and had been once severely rebuked by him for hindering their being brought to receive his benediction; and saw him laying his hands on them, and solemnly declaring them to be *subjects of his kingdom*.—Further, they knew that Baptism was appointed as a *token from God of the remission of sin, or of justification*, and that Infants were in the eye of the Christian law *treated as sinners*, and under a *sentence of condemnation*. Finally, they knew that Christ came, not to lessen or abridge the privileges of God's church (of which this *admission* of Infants was confessedly one) but to heighten and to enlarge them.—Let these several circumstances be impartially weighed, and then let any man say—whether

* Numb. iii. 6, 7, 8, 28. And claimed by God as his SERVANTS. Levit. xxv. 41, 42.

ther, as the *commission* will admit of a favourable and a large sense, so as to include Infants, the apostles would not naturally, and even necessarily, suppose them *comprehended* therein? And whether, there was not a most strong, and most manifest *necessity*, if Christ intended that Infants should *not* be included in it, that he should have expressly *excepted* them?

The *commission* viewed in *this*, which is its proper and true *light*, is so far from concluding any thing *against* the baptizing Infants, that it strongly favours and supports it. For since, it is delivered in such general terms as to be capable of admitting Infants; and since, from the above circumstances, the apostles would naturally and unavoidably understand it as intending their *admission*; it follows, that our Lord's *silence*, as to *these*, is a strong and most manifest presumption in their favour; and that his not *excluding*, or *excepting*, them from the *christian* covenant, is, in all equitable construction, a *permission* or *order* that they should be admitted into it.

ARGUMENT IV.

Shall be drawn from the evident and clear Consequences of other passages of Scripture.

I. IN Rom. xi. the Apostle, discoursing of the exclusion of a chief part of the Jews from the visible church of God, and the reception of the Gentiles in their stead; speaks of it under this figure, ver. 17. *And if some of the branches (the Jews) be broken off, and thou (a Gentile) being a wild olive-tree, wer't grafted in amongst them, and with them partakest of the root*

and fatness of the olive-tree ; boast not, &c. Here let it be noted, 1. The olive-tree is the *Abrahamic covenant or church* ; from which the *unbelieving Jews* are cast out ; and into which the *believing Gentiles* are taken in their stead. 2. The *root and fatness* of this olive-tree, of which the *ingrafted branches* partake, are the *religious privileges or grants*, belonging to that covenant or church. Now 3. It was a very valuable and indisputable privilege of that covenant, that the faith of a *parent grafted his children, together with himself* into that olive-tree, i. e. admitted them into the church, or into a *covenant-relation to God*. Therefore 4. The *unbelieving Jew* being cut off from this root, and the *believing Gentile* succeeding, and being grafted into his room, and partaking jointly with the natural branches of *all* their church privileges, immunities, and grants, he must undoubtedly partake of *this privilege too*.

What part of this argument can possibly be denied ? Will it be said—that the faith of a parent did not graft his *children, together with himself*, into the visible church, before the coming of *Christ*? No—Or, that this was not a privilege? No—Can it be urged then, that *believing Gentiles* are not now taken in to be **SUGKOINONOI TES RIXES**, *joint partakers of the root*,* i. e. of the church privileges and grants which the *unbelieving Jew* hath lost ? This were highly absurd : for they are expressly declared by the apostle,† to be **SUGKLERONOMOI**, *Fellow-Heirs*; **SUSSOMA**, *of the same body*; and **SUMMETOKOI TES EPAGGE-LIAS**, *Joint-Partakers of the promise*.

The argument, then, most clearly and strongly concludes for the visible admission of the Infants of *believing Gentiles*, together with themselves, into the covenant and church of God. Is he the *God of the Jews only*? Is he not *also of the Gentiles*? A God, in the same manner,

* Rom. xi. 17.

† Eph. iii. 6.

manner, in the same latitude and extent, to *us*, as he was to *them*? Yes; he is, undoubtedly, thus a God to believing Gentiles also. Accordingly Isaiah, speaking of the Christian dispensation, or the state of the church under the *Messiah*, says, that not only believers should be esteemed *the seed of the blessed of the Lord*, (or the blessed seed of the Lord) but also *their offspring together with them*.*

II. From our Saviour's own words, Mark x. 14. *Suffer the Little Children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.* And John iii. 5, *Except any one (tis) is born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* From these two passages, I say, put together, the right of Infants to Baptism may be also clearly inferred. For in one, they are declared actually to have a place in God's kingdom or church; and yet into this kingdom or church, the other, as expressly says, *NONE can be admitted without being baptised*.

The *kingdom of God*, in the gospel, denotes, either the *visible church on earth*; or the *invisible one in heaven*. Answerable to these, there is a twofold regeneration, namely, a being *born again of water* (i. e. baptised, which is therefore called the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5.) which admits into the *visible church*; and, a being *born again of the spirit* (called the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*) which admits into the *invisible*. Now, in which soever of these senses the expression is here taken, it strongly concludes for the Baptism of Infants. For

1. If, by the *kingdom of God*, be meant the *visible church on earth*; our Lord, by saying *of such is the kingdom*, declares that Infants are to be considered as having a place in *this kingdom*, i. e. as being members of that body, society, or church, which he, as *Messiah*, came

* Isaiah lxv. 23.

came to rule and to save: But, if they are to be considered as a part of *this kingdom, or visible church,* they are, then to be baptised, or born again of water, for this is the *only appointed rite of entering into it.* Or

2. If, by the *kingdom of God,* we understand the *invisible church in heaven;* into that Infants cannot enter, except they are *born again of the spirit, i.e. regenerated, quickened, and raised from the dead.** But, if they are capable and proper subjects of a *regeneration by the Spirit,* they must be also of *Baptism;* for the *baptismal water* is nothing else but the appointed *token or emblem of this regenerating spirit.* Seeing then, that God grants them the *thing signified, viz. the renewing of the Holy Ghost;* it can never be thought his will, that the *sign or token be denied them, viz. the washing of regeneration, or Baptism.*

The argument, then, is conclusive, in whatever sense we take, the *kingdom of God.* For our Lord having, in one place, declared, *that the little children should be brought to him, because of such is the kingdom:* and in another, *that except any one is born of water, baptised, he cannot enter into this kingdom—it most evidently follows—that Infants are capable of being born again of water, or baptised; because, else, they could not enter into this kingdom, into which our Lord here expressly declares, they do enter, and are admitted.*†

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* A *resurrection from the dead* is frequently spoken of in scripture as a being *born again, or a regeneration.* Vid. Rom. i. 4. Luke xx. 36. Mat. xix. 28. Acts xiii. 33. Rom. viii. 29. Col. i. 18. Heb. i.

+ The words, John iii. 5. thus interpreted, are a very pertinent and just rebuke of Nicodemus's cowardice. It is as though our Lord had said—*Except you have the courage to profess openly my religion, signified by your submission to the ceremony of Baptism, you cannot be a member of my visible church on earth: and, notwithstanding your descent from Abraham, if* “you

It cannot be here said—that the words of such—are to be understood, not of Infants *in years*, but of persons of a *childlike* and *humble disposition*. Because this would represent our Lord's conduct as extremely absurd. For, why should he be *very angry* with his disciples, for forbidding Infants *in years* to be brought to him, because of *grown persons* of an humble disposition His kingdom consisted? There is no just connection betwixt his great displeasure at them for keeping Infants from him; and his giving, as the reason of it, that to quite different subjects, meek and humble persons, his kingdom belonged. According to this interpretation, our Lord might rationally have done the same, had *lambs* or *doves* been going to be presented to him; he might have been *very angry* with those who should have *forbid* them, and have said—*suffer them to be brought*, *for* of such, i.e. persons of a meek and harmless temper, *is the kingdom of God.* †

Finally: let it be added—that as our Lord *took these Infants into his arms, laid his hands upon and blessed them*; it hence appears—that Infants are capable of the *divine influence, benediction, and the operations of the Holy Spirit.* Now what are *these*, but the *very things* principally intended to be represented by the *baptismal water*? Though our Lord did not *pour water on them*, putting up a prayer for them; he performed a *religious ceremony* on them equally solemn, and of much, (perhaps exactly) the same purport; he *laid his hands upon them*, and *prayed*; which was an act of *religious worship* hardly

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“are not born of an higher principle, even of the spirit, or *Holy Ghost*; your *mind* will be never raised to that state of purity and moral rectitude, nor your *body* to that incorruptibility, spirituality and life, which is necessary to your admission into my *invisible kingdom in heaven.*”

† Dr. Gale, therefore, ingenuously owns, that *this passage* is to be understood of *Infants in years.* Reflections, &c. pag. 421.

at all differing from baptising them with water. Yea, it was a far greater thing for the saviour of the world to take up Infants in his arms and solemnly to bleſs them, than for any minister now to baptise them with water in his name. Further,

III. It is also very worthy to be observed—that the Christian dispensation, as well as the Jewish, makes an evident distinction betwixt the *children of believers*, and the *children of infidels*.

Several of the Corinthian converts having unbelieving yoke-fellows, doubted of the lawfulness of cohabiting with them; and seemed to think themselves obliged to separate; lest the *offspring* of such unequal marriages should be deemed *impure* and *unmeet* to be taken into covenant with God. This their doubt seemed to be just, and to carry in it great weight; being grounded on the known conduct of Ezra, and the Jewish elders, in a parallel case. See Ezra, x. 1, 2, 3. But the apostle resolves it, by telling them—that the unbelieving yoke-fellow was so far *sanc*tified** by (or to, or because of) the believing, as that their *children which would otherwise be unclean, are now holy.** Here then we see a most clear and evident *distinction* made betwixt the *children of believers* and the *children of infidels*: the one are *unclean*, i. e. do not stand in any visible covenant relation to Jehovah, and the other are *holy*, i. e. in the same sense *holy*, as the Jews were an *holy nation*, taken into a peculiar relation to God.†

These

* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

+ This sentiment of an *Infant's Holiness*, and of the propriety and duty of its being brought into the Church of GOD, and there solemnly devoted to him, was quite scriptural and rational; as well as perfectly agreeable to the appointed customs and forms, and language of those times. For, Luke ii. 22, 23, 'tis said—*They brought the Infant JESUS to the Temple, to PRESENT HIM TO THE LORD : As it is written in the law :*

Every

These several scriptures being impartially weighed, the propriety and fitness of bringing children to baptism seems to be established beyond all rational doubt. As a conclusion of this argument I beg leave to ask—Must not the *Christian dispensation* be allowed, in *all things*, to have the *preference*, and to be *better* than the *Jewish*? But, if it *excludes our Infants* from the covenant of God, and from standing in any federal relation to heaven; then here is *one*, and that a very important and considerable instance in which it is vastly *inferior*. Now, had *this* really been the case, how mighty and just a *prejudice* would it have raised in the Jews against Christianity! What complaints and objections should we, doubtless, have heard them making against this new dispensation, as *casting their children out of God's covenant*, and putting them upon a *level with those of infidels and pagans*! But, as amongst their many and loud *cavils* at the religion of Christ, and the continued oppositions and reproaches of the Judaizers, we find not the least shadow of a *complaint* of this kind, it may with great assurance be concluded, there was no such occasion given; but that *Christianity*, as it found, so it continued and confirmed; the Infants of good men in the covenant of God.

Having proceeded thus far in the argument; I beg leave here to recapitulate, and sum up the force of what has been offered, in the following queries; which will soon lead a fair enquirer to an *easy issue* of the debate.

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Query I.

Every first-born male shall be holy to the Lord. Hence it plainly follows. 1. That *Infants* are capable of *Holiness*: and that some were accounted *holy* (i. e. taken into a more peculiar *relation to GOD*) whilst others were not. And 2. That our *Lord* himself, when an *Infant* passed under a *sacred ceremony*, of the same nature with our *Infants* when we bring them to be *baptised*. The *Infant Jesus*, like ours, was brot to the place of worship, there solemnly to be *presented*, or *devoted*, to the *Lord*.

Query I. Are not Infants, in the eye or construction of the *Christian* law, under a *sentence of condemnation*, and treated as *sinners*?

Query II. Are they not, consequently, in the eye of that law, capable of *justification* and of being *treated as righteous*?

Query III. If, then, they are *capable* of *justification* and *remission*, is it not highly reasonable and even necessary to suppose that the *Christian* law, which is a manifestation of God's richest mercy to mankind, has made *provision* for it, and given some *token* of it?

Query IV. Were not the Infants of believers taken into covenant with God; and did they not stand in a more *immediate relation* to him, than the Infants of unbelieving Canaanites, Moabites, &c. both under the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensations?—And was not this a peculiar *honour* and *advantage* to these Infants?

Query V. Are not the Infants of us, Christians, as capable of this favour, viz. of being taken visibly into God's covenant, as their (the Israelites) Infants were: but if ours are not; is not, here an important circumstance in which both the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensations were more favourable to mankind, and manifested greater grace than the dispensation of Jesus Christ?—But can this possibly be?

Query VI. Are not the Infants of Christians (who are now an *holy priesthood*, and who succeed to all the privileges of the *Jewish church*) are not, I say, *their* Infants as capable του ΜΑΤΗΤΕΥΕΣΘΑΙ, of being *discipled*, as the Infants of the *Jewish priesthood* were, of being enrolled in the temple register, and entered as *ministers to Aaron*, and as ΦΥΛΑΣΣΟΝΤΕΣ ΤΑΣ ΦΥΛΑΚΑΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΓΙΟΝ, *keeping the charge of the sanctuary*: and are not Infants as capable, under the *Christian* covenant, of being baptised as they were of circumcision both under the *Abrahamic* and *Mosaic*?

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Let the scriptures, then, interpret themselves; and one part of the divine dispensation be suffered to explain the other (of which *other*, it was intended to be a *figure* or *type*) and we shall find it perfectly agreeable, to the analogy and stile of scripture, as well as to the reason of things, that Infants should be admitted as members of the *Christian church*, and are therefore included in the commission to baptise.

A R G U M E N T V.

From Apostolic Tradition.

THE Baptism of Infants was the undoubted practice of the christian church, in its purest and first ages; the ages immediately succeeding the Apostles; who could not but know what the *Apostolic* doctrine and practice was as to this matter.

This, I apprehend, to be an argument of great weight. For the enquiry being about *a fact*, which could not but be publickly and perfectly known, and not possible to be mistaken, in the ages immediately succeeding the apostles; the sense of *those ages*, concerning *this fact*, must needs be of great moment in deciding the point.—Whether the *Apostles* and *Evangelists* formed the first churches throughout the whole world, upon the plan of *Infant Baptism*; or not; that is to say, whether they admitted *Infants*, together with their *believing parents*, into the church by Baptism; or did not so admit them, was a fact of such nature as could not but be evident, and indubitably known, to *all* the Christians of the first age. Nor was it, humanly speaking, possible that the *apostolic* practice in this point should

should be universally departed from, disused and thrown out, in so short a space of time, as we shall presently see the Baptism of Infants to have universally prevailed. To prepare the way to this proof, I beg leave to premise these two things.

1. To weaken the testimony of the *antient writers* and *fathers* upon this point, some have objected the many foolish and absurd *opinions* and *interpretations* of scripture with which their writings abound. But this is extremely weak. For they are not here appealed to as *reasoners*, or *interpreters*, but only as *historians* or *witnesses* to a public standing fact.

2. If any think it strange, that we have no more express testimonies to this practice of the church, in the writings of *these fathers*, let him to consider.—That the far greater part of their writings are lost; and that it is but little more than their names and a few pieces of their works, especially as to the *first age*, that are transmitted down to us.—And also, that the baptism of Infants being then *universally* practised, and no doubts or dispute having ever been moved about it; and it being likewise the constant ever prevailing custom of all the enemies of Christianity, both Jews and Pagans, to admit Infants to a participation of their *religious ceremonies and rites* together with their parents. These things considered, it will not appear strange that this point is so rarely touched on in the writings of those times. There are a thousand religious books written in the *present age*, in which the least hint is not to be found about *baptising* of Infants, though the point has now been so long and so warmly controverted amongst us: much less, then, should one expect to find any thing but a few allusions and hints as to this matter, in the books of those *early times*.

This being premised, we proceed to the *testimonies*.
The first shall be from

JUSTIN

JUSTIN MARTYR, who wrote about forty years after the Apostolic age. He says, " Several persons among us, both men and women, of sixty or seventy years old, who were proselyted, or made disciples, to Christ in, or from, their infancy do continue uncorrupt."* Now, proselyted to Christ from their infancy, they could not be, without being, from their infancy, considered and treated as proselytes to Christ; that is, without being from their infancy baptised.—For whosoever EMATHETEUTHESAN TO CHRISTO, were discipled or proselyted to Christ, were by his express order, Mat. xxviii. 19. to be baptised. Note seventy years from JUSTIN carries us back, almost into the middle of the Apostolic age.

IRÆNEUS, who wrote about sixty seven years after the Apostles; and was born it is said, some years before the death of St. John, says concerning Christ.—" Omnes enim venit per semetipsum salvare; omnes inquam, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, INFANTES & parvulos & pueros & juventes."†—" That he came to save all persons by himself; all, I mean, who by him are regenerated, i. e. baptised, unto God, INFANTS and little ones, and youths and elder persons?"—that word *renascor*, regenerated, in the writings of these antients, particularly of Irenæus, is most familiarly used to signify baptised, see from a vast variety of instances proved, beyond all doubt, in Dr. Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*. Vol. I. Chap. iii. § 2, 3. and Defence pag. 318, 324.—And that by Infants are here meant Children, before they come to the use of reason, is evident, not only as these must necessarily be included in the ALL whom he came to save; but also because, after he had mentioned Infants and others regenerated,

be

* Just. Martyr. Apol. ii.

† Irenæus adv. Haer. lib. iii. cap. 39.

he runs over the several ranks of age again; but with this remarkable difference, that whereas he mentions the benefit of Christ's example, as what was to be taken by each of the other ranks, viz. the *parvuli*, the *juvenes*, and the *seniores*, he says no such thing concerning the *Infantes Infants*; for this reason, no doubt, viz. that *these only*, of all the mentioned ranks, were *incapable* of this benefit.

TERTULLIAN, who flourished about an hundred years after the Apostles, is the only person, among the antients, who advises to *defer* the Baptism of Infants, *except in cases of necessity or in danger of death*. But his advising to defer it, except in cases of necessity, is an incontestible proof that the *baptising of Infants* was the *practice* of those times. And as he appears to be quite singular in this his advice; so, that he was extremely whimsical and absurd in his opinions on this, as well as several other points of religion, all who have read his works perfectly well know. For, upon the same grounds on which he recommends the *deferring* the baptism of Infants, he advises also—“ That unmarried persons should be kept off from this sacrament, who are likely to come into temptation; as well those who never were married, as those in widowhood; until they either marry, or be confirmed in continence. They who understand the weight of baptism will rather dread the receiving of it, than the delaying of it.”*

This is Tertullian's reasoning upon the point; but we have nothing to do with that; all we cite him for is a voucher to an antient fact, to prove that *in his days Infants were baptised*. To this fact he bears incontestible witness. His saying—“ Itaque pro cuiusque personæ conditione, &c. Therefore according to every ones condition, disposition and also age, the de-

“ laying

* Tert. de Baptismo, cap. 18.

" laying of baptism is more profitable; especially in the case of children." and his asking—" Quid festinat innocens ætas ad remissionem peccatorum? Quid enim necesse est, si non tam necesse sponsores etiam periculo ingeri." — " Why does that innocent age make such haste to the remission of sins, (*i. e. to the laver of baptism?*) What occasion is there, except in cases of necessity, that the sponsors or godfathers, be brought into danger?" These questions plainly prove the baptising of Infants to have been the practice of his days.

Note. There are some, who upon very probable grounds, understand these passages of *Tertullian* as relating only to the baptism of the Infants of heathen parents; which when they came into their power by purchase, conquest, &c. the Christians of those times were wont to baptise. And that it is only to delay the baptising of such Infants as these, which *Tertullian* advises, there is strong reason to believe.

Hitherto, we find this point, of Infant baptism, but transiently touched on by these early writers: there having yet no controversy or doubt arisen in the church which might give occasion to their speaking more expressly concerning it. But about *this time*, there arose some dispute about *original sin*, or the nature and degree of that pollution with which new-born Infants are tainted. Henceforward, therefore, we shall find more direct and express passages relating to their Baptism.

ORIGEN, about an hundred and ten years after the Apostles, speaking of the pollution which cleaves to Infants, says,— " Adde his etiam." — " Besides this also let it be considered; what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness, Infants also by the usage of the church are baptised: when if there were nothing in Infants which wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them." *

And

* Homil. viii. in Levit. cap. 12.

And again, "Parvuli baptizantur in remissionem."—
 "Infants are baptised for the remission of sins. Of
 what sins? Or when have they sinned? Or how can
 any reason of the laver hold good in their case; but
 according to that sense before-mentioned; none is free
 from pollution, though his life be but the length of one
 day upon the earth? And it is for that reason, because
 by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth
 is taken away, that Infants are baptised."]

In another treatise he says—"Pro hoc & ecclesia."—
 "For this also it was, that the church had from the
 Apostles a tradition, or order, to give baptism also to
 Infants. For they to whom the divine mysteries
 were committed, knew that there is in all persons the
 natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by
 water and the spirit."‡

There are other passages of *Origen*, full to this point; but these, already cited, abundantly prove the baptism of Infants to be the standing custom of his days. That they are genuine and authentic, see clearly shewn in *Dr. Wall's History of Infant Baptism*, Vol. I. pag. 55. and *Defence*, pag. 372.

Note. *Origen* was born, about eighty-five years after the age of the Apostles; and if baptised in infancy (as there is no reason to question but he was, his father and grand-father having both been Christians) here is clear proof of its practice very near the *Apostolic age*. Tho' he resided chiefly at Alexandria in Egypt, he had been conversant in almost all the noted churches of the world. His testimony, therefore, to the point may justly be supposed to speak the sense of them all.*

We

‡ *Ibid. in Luc.* † *Ibid. Comment. in Epist. Rom. L. 5.*

* The learned Dr. *Gale*, who with great acuteness had disputed the preceding authorities (but whose objections have been abundantly answered by *Dr. Wall*) does not so much as pretend

We next proceed to CYPRIAN, who wrote about an hundred and fifty years after the apostles ; and gives, if it be possible, a yet more and indubitable testimony to this fact. In his time (Anno Domini 253) a council of 66 bishops being convened at Carthage ; one *Fidus*, a country bishop, having entertained some doubt (not whether *Infants* should be baptised at all, but) whether Baptism might lawfully be given them, till they were *eight days* old, according to the law of *circumcision*? In answer to this doubt, they unanimously decreed—“*That the baptism of Infants was not to be deferred till the eighth day.*”—And after many things spoken to the point they conclude thus—“Cæterum si homines impediunt aliquid.—But if any thing could hinder men from baptism, it will be heinous sins, which will debar the adult and mature therefrom. And if those who have sinned extremely, yet if afterward they believe, are baptised, and no man is prohibited from this grace ; how much more ought not *an infant* to be prohibited ; who, being *but just born*, is guilty of no sin, but of original which he contracted from *Adam*.—Wherefore, dearly beloved, it is our opinion that from baptism and the grace of God, who is kind and benign to all, none ought to be prohibited by us ; which as it is to be observed with respect to *all*, so especially with respect to *Infants*, and those who are *but just born*, who deserve our help and the divine mercy.”*

Hence, then, it incontestibly appears, that the Baptism of *Infants* was the constant, established practice of the church at this time : inasmuch, as neither the person who proposed the doubt, nor any one of the sixty-

pretend to contest those which follow, from Cyrian and Austin. These, therefore, being admitted as *incontestible* by our opponents ; we shall see presently, the strength with which they conclude in our favour.

* Cyprian Epist. ad Fidum. Epist. 64.

fix bishops who answer it, made the least question of the Baptism of Infants, but speak of it as a thing universally acknowledged and practised in the church.

Now, as this was but an hundred and fifty years after the Apostles; and some of these bishops may reasonably be supposed seventy or eighty years old; if they were baptised in *their infancy* (which can with no reason be doubted) it carries up the practice to within eighty years of the Apostles themselves. And at the time of their infancy, there were many alive who were born *within* the very age of the Apostles, and could not but certainly and infallibly know what the *apostolic* practice and appointment was to this matter.

The CLEMENTINE CONSTITUTIONS (a book thought by some to be of great antiquity; and by all acknowledged to be extant in the fourth or fifth century, and to contain a good account of the antient discipline and practice) have this express admonition

“BAPTISETE DE UMON KAI TA NEPIA.”—

“And baptise your Infants, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God:” for he says, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.”

There are several other testimonies, from Clemens Alexandrinus; quest. & respon. apud Just. Martyr; Greg. Nazian; Basil; Ambrose; Chrysostom; and Jerom, most full to this purpose, to be seen in Dr. Wall’s *History of Infant Baptism*, too long to be here inserted; I shall further insist, only, upon a very remarkable and decisive one, from the writings of Austin and Pelagius; about three hundred and ten years after the Apostles. I bring it not to prove *Baptism of Infants* to have been the undoubted, universal practice of the church in *their days*; (this would be quite needless, after the much earlier, and the indisputable evidence

already

already produced from the council at Carthage, &c.) but, to shew it to have been the *constant* and *immemorial* practice from the very beginning of Christianity.

In his controversy with *Pelagius*, about *original sin*, to prove Infants to be tainted with it, *Austin* frequently and with great triumph urges *their Baptism*; demanding—"Why Infants are baptised for the remission of sin, if they have none?" *Pelagius* seems exceedingly embarrassed by this argument;*

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* It is surprising, to see the shifts by which *Pelagius*, *Celestius*, and their followers, endeavour to evade the force of this argument. Sometimes they acknowledged Infants to have *actual sin*, and that their pevishness and froward temper is to be considered as such.---Sometimes, they urged, that Infants had *pre existed*; and it was for sins done in some former state, that they were brought to the baptismal laver.---Sometimes, they said, that they were not baptised for the *forgiveness of sins*; but that they may be made *heirs of the kingdom*.---Sometimes, that they were *baptised for forgiveness*; not that they had any sin, but that the uniformity of the words might be kept; or, because they were baptised into the church, where *forgiveness* was to be had; and with a sacrament, which had the means of *forgiveness* for those who wanted it. Vid. *Wall's history*, Vol. I. pag. 280.

To such extreme difficulties they thought themselves reduced, to reconcile their opinion with the *Baptism of Infants*. But, these had been all instantly removed, and the battery which so annoyed them been demolished at once, by only denying that Infants were to be baptised. Yet, so far are they from this, that they seem not to have raised the least doubt of this kind. *Pelagius* owns, as above cited. And *Celestius* confesses, that Infants are to be baptised according to the rule of the *UNIVERSAL church*.

Note. *Pelagius* and *Celestius* were born, one in *Britain*, the other in *Ireland*; they lived a long time in *Rome*, the then center of the world, and reputed head of the church: they were both, for some time, at *Carthage*, in *Africa*; then, the one settled at *Jerusalem*; the other travelled through all the noted *Greek* and *Eastern* churches, in *Europe* and *Asia*. If there had, then, been any church, or number of churches, throughout the whole world, not only in that, but in the two preceeding

one sees how much it concerned him to deny the baptism of Infants, had there been any *possible* ground for it; and to do all that in him lay, to invalidate and disprove it. Had it been an innovation, a departure from the Apostolic practice; it is impossible but so very learned and acute a person as Pelagius, who lived so near the Apostles, and had been personally conversant in some of the most noted churches of Europe, Asia, and Africa, must have been able to discover it, and both to have and to give at least some strong suspicion of it. But does the very sagacious Pelagius attempt any thing like this? No: so far from it, that some of his adversaries having drawn as a consequence of his opinion, that Infants are not to be baptised—He warmly disclaims it, and with indignation complains—“ Se ab hominibus “ infamari quod neget parvulis Baptismi sacramentum, “ That he had been *staggeringly* represented by men, as “ denying the sacrament of baptism to Infants, and pro-“ promising the kingdom of Heaven to any without the re-“ demption of Christ.” And adds “ Nunquam se, vel “ impium aliquem hæreticum, audisse qui hoc quod “ proposuit de parvulis diceret.—That he never heard, “ no not even any impious heretic, who would say that “ which he had mentioned, viz. that unbaptised Infants “ are not liable to the condemnation of the first man, “ and that they are not to be cleansed by the regene-“ ration of Baptism.” And then proceeds—“ Quis “ enim ita evangelicæ lectionis ignarus est, &c.—For “ who is so ignorant of that which is read in the gospel “ as I do not say boldly to affirm, but even lightly to
“ suggest

preceding ages, who denied the Baptism of Infants; it is impossible, but these two very learned and sagacious persons must have known, or heard of it: and that they would not have failed to take mighty advantage from it, to check the triumphs of their opponents; and to wrest from them this argument, by which, of all others, they were most grievously pressed.

" suggest, or even to imagine such a thing ? In a word,
 " who can be so impious, as to hinder *Infants* from
 " being *baptised* and born again in Christ ; and so make
 " them miss of the kingdom of God ?"

And having cited these words of our Saviour John iii. 5. *no one can enter into the kingdom of God, except he is born again of water and of the spirit,* he goes on — “ *Quis ille tam impius est qui cujuslibet ætatis parvulo.* ” — “ Who is there so impious as to refuse to an *Infant* of what age soever, the common redemption of mankind.”* *Austin* also, reciting the above-mentioned decision of the council at *Carthage*, which determines that *Infants are in no wise to be denied Baptism*, adds — “ *Non solum in catholicâ ecclesiâ, verum etiam in qualibet heresi vel schismate constitutis, non memini me aliud legisse.* ” — “ That neither from such as were of the catholic church, nor of such as belonged to any sect or schism, whatsoever, he remembered not to have read otherwise in any writer.”† i. e. of any who denied that Infants were baptised upon the account of original sin. “ This the church has always had, has always held.”‡

These, now, are the evidence, on which we rest the antiquity of this fact ; and by which we prove the baptism of Infants to have been the practice of the Christian church, from the very beginning. *Justin Martyr* about forty years ; *Irenæus* about sixty-seven ; and *Tertullian* about an hundred years after the *Apostles*, give plain intimations of its being the *Christian practice* in their times. From *Origen* an hundred and ten years ; and from *Cyprian* and the synod of sixty-six bishops, one hundred and fifty years from the above date, we have indisputable proof of its being then the established and standing usage of the church. And

Austin

* *Austin de peccato Origen.* cap. 17, 18. † *Ibid de pec. Merit.* cap. 6. ‡ *Ibid Serm. x. de verb. Apost.*

Austin and Pelagius, about three hundred and ten years after the Apostles (though the latter was under the strongest temptation, and even necessity to deny the baptism of Infants, had there been any possible ground for it) acknowledge, that they never heard, nor read of any, whether true Christian, Heretic, or Schismatic, who denied baptism to Infants. This is the evidence: let us now argue from it.

I. ALL the churches, throughout the whole Christian world, were in the age of the Apostles, formed and established upon one and the same plan. That is to say, they all either baptised Infants; or else they all rejected them from baptism. What the opinion, and the practice, of the Apostles was in this matter, (who were sent out into all the world to preach and establish churches) must be perfectly, universally, infallibly known; nor could it possibly be mistaken, by any one single church throughout the whole earth, during the Apostolic age. The Corinthians, for instance, the Galatians, the Thessalonians, &c. all perfectly knew, whether Paul and his companions, when they baptised and formed them into a church, baptised their Infants also; or else rejected them from Baptism. And,

2. As to the age, immediately following the Apostles; it is impossible that THEY could be ignorant or mistaken as to this fact. They could not be in the least doubt, how their fathers had received and learnt from the Apostles, and practised as to this matter. For whether Infants were, or were not, then baptised; was so notorious and plain a fact, a fact of so public and conspicuous a nature, as could not possibly escape the knowledge of every particular Christian, then living upon earth. *

Now

* With whatever credulity as to MIRACLES, said to be wrought in their days, these early writers may be charged; it cannot at all affect their evidence to the fact, here, in debate.

Fur.

Now if *all the churches* throughout the world, were really established by the *Apostles* upon the plan of *only Adult Baptism*; and they *every where* rejected Infants, and *forbid* them to be baptised; it will appear absolutely *inconceivable*, and even a moral *Impossibility*, that the Baptism of *Infants* should so early, so wisely, so universally *prevail*, throughout the whole world, as we have now seen it to have done.

For if the Baptism of Infants was *not* an *apostolic* institution and practice, how *must* the persons, who *first* attempted to introduce it, be received? Would not all their neighbour Christians immediately cry out upon the *innovation*, and demand,—“*By what authority do you presume to perform this quite new, this unheard of and strange ceremony of baptising an Infant?*” Suppose them to have urged, in support of their practice, the same scriptures with us; would it not have presently been replied upon them with unanswerable strength?—“*But did not the Apostles and first preachers of christianity understand the true sense and force of these scriptures? Yet not one of them all, nor any one of their followers, ever baptised an Infant, as we all perfectly know, and as you cannot but own. Look into all the churches throughout the whole earth, into Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Africk, Spain, &c. and you will find there never was such a thing known, nor heard of amongst Christians, as baptising an Infant.*”

What! I greatly wonder, could the *first baptisers of Infants* possibly reply? Could they urge that it was an

apostolic

For, as there was no *possibility* of their being themselves *deceived* as to this matter; so neither could they be under temptation to *falsify* in their accounts of it. Nor indeed, had the temptation been ever so strong, could they have ventured to *falsify* in a fact notorious to all the world; and when *every Christian* then living could have stepped forth, and born witness to the *falshood* of their account.

apostolic injunction and practice? No: the whole Christian world would have rose up against them, and born witness to the falsehood of such a pretence. Could they hope then to establish this *invention* of their own; yea, was it *actually established*, in direct opposition to the *Apostles authority*, and to their *then* perfectly well-known institution and practice?—Impossible to imagine!

What then! I ask again, could the *first* baptisers of Infants urge in favour of their practice? Or how was it possible, it should *be received*, yea *prevail*, yea so *universally* prevail, that the very learned and acute *Pelagius* about three hundred years after, never heard of a church amongst either *Catholics* or *Heretics*, who did not baptise Infants, if *ALL the churches* in the world were constituted by the Apostles upon the directly opposite plan? yea, and when the persons who first began this practice could not but *own*, that the authority and example of *ALL the Apostles* and of *ALL the primitive Christians*, and of *ALL the churches* in the world were absolutely against them?

Well; but suppose a *few persons* were of so odd a turn of mind, as to run into this quite novel and unheard of practice of *baptising Infants*; can it be imagined that *whole churches* would be led blindly away after them? Or, if *whole churches* might be thus *seduced*; could *whole nations* be so too? Yea, if *whole nations* might; can it enter into the heart of any reasonable man that *ALL the nations* of the *Christian world*, both the *eastern* and the *western* churches, in the space of about *two hundred years*, *universally* fell in with this *anti apostolic* and *new-invented* rite of worship: and so strangely *apostatised* from the primitive and pure doctrine of Christ as to this matter! It were the height of absurdity even to surmise such a thing.

The *extravagance* of the supposition is moreover, mightily increased, by remembering—that a vast number
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of sects and heresies sprung up, and the Christian church was rent into many angry and contending parties, during these times.* In the second century, or the age immediately following the apostles, there were those who took their names from *Cerinthus*, *Ebion*, *Valentinus*, *Carpocrates*, *Marcion*, *Montanus*; and the whole church was rent into two furious and angry sects, the *eastern* and the *western*, by the controversy about *easter*. In the third century there arose *Novatian*, *Sabellius*, *Paulus Samosatensis*, *Manes*, &c. with their followers. In the fourth, the *Meletians*, *Arians*, *Athanasiens*, &c. Now these several inflamed parties, into which by divine permission, the church was then divided, were watchful and severe spies upon each others conduct: so that if any of them had *innovated* in this matter, of *baptising Infants*, how readily would the rest have entered their protest against it, and exclaimed loudly upon the *innovation*? But, it seems, so far were they from this; that however mutually inflamed and angry as to other points; yet, laying aside their animosity, they all surprisingly *agree*, in the affair of *baptising Infants*, to depart from the apostolic practice; and by an unaccountable *confederacy* connive at one another in this dangerous superstition.—Strange! beyond all belief! That amidst their many mutual accusations, reproaches, complaints, we meet not, in all antiquity, with one upon this head; and not a man, *Catholic* nor *Heretic*, dropping a single word against this gross innovation; except, perhaps, *Tertullian*; and he not absolutely, (if at all) censuring it; and supporting his dislike

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of

* No less than NINETY different *heresies* are said to have sprung up in the three first centuries.

Irenæus, *Epiphanius*, *Philastrius*, *Austin*, and *Theodoret*, it has been justly observed, each of them wrote Catalogues of the several *Sects* and *Sorts* of Christians they had ever heard of; but none of them mention any that denied *Infant Baptism*, except those who denied all *Baptism*.

of it, by reasons which are no strength, but a dishonour to any cause.

For an hundred years after the death of the Apostles, their authority was sufficient, our brethren acknowledging, to keep such an innovation from entering the church. They therefore usually place the introduction of this practice about the beginning of the third century. But behold! in the short space of about two hundred years more; without a single precept, to warrant or a single example to encourage it, yea with the well-known practice of the Apostles themselves, and of all the churches they ever planted throughout the whole world, confessedly, openly, directly against it; under all these disadvantages, the *Baptism of Infants*, it seems, so every where prevailed, that upon the face of the whole earth there was not a church found where it was not performed!

To him that believes this, what can be incredible!

Some, perhaps, to evade the force of the foregoing argument, may object—"There have been other great corruptions, such as *image-worship, transubstantiation, &c.* which have alike universally prevailed in the church." But the answer is extremely obvious. 1. This is far from being true; nay it is entirely without foundation. Neither image-worship, nor transubstantiation, ever universally prevailed. The latter has by the greater part of the Christian church been in all times rejected as it is at this day; and though the former, since the seventh century, has spread itself wide, and too generally prevailed; yet it was not without mighty struggles and oppositions in the church: numerous synods of bishops zealously declared against it: solemn decrees of councils, not in one kingdom or church only, but in diverse regions of the earth, publickly condemned it: the arm both of civil and military power was strenuously exerted to establish and support it: grievous persecutions were raised upon its account: and many testified

their

their abhorrence of it by bitter sufferings, and death itself.—And is this a case at all parallel to that of *Infant-Baptism*, which we have now been considering? The most prejudiced judgment must confess it is not. Besides,

2. Had these corruptions, indeed, as universally prevailed, as *Infant-Baptism* ever did; yet would this, by no means, have put them upon an equal foot with that; or have made the cases at all parallel. For, when the *Bishop of Rome* had claimed and was acknowledged to be the *infallible*, the *supreme pastor* of the church, the *vicar of Christ*, &c. when *emperors and kings* took upon them to convene councils, to explain doctrines, and establish faith by dint of *civil authority*; cherishing and upholding one party by worldly honours and preferments; but terrifying and crushing others by banishment, confiscations, imprisonment and death: finally; when the *clergy* had both the terrors and the riches of this world, much at their disposal; and the spirit of *true piety, fortitude, and faith*, began to languish in the church (as it miserably languished, in the time when *image-worship* and *transubstantiation* were brought in) and a spirit of *p pride and domination, of sensuality and sloth* sprung up in its room.—When this, I say, was the case, such an *universal departure* from the Apostles doctrine and practice may seem easily to be accounted for, and has nothing in it so strange. But—when the circumstances of the church were the very *reverse* of all this; harassed and severely pressed by persecutions from without; split into various sects and angry parties within; destitute of worldly honours to recommend, and of worldly terrors to enforce, any doctrine or practice; and acknowledging no visible, supreme, infallible *head*, as having *dominion over its faith*; when this was the case (as in the *three first centuries*, when *Infant-Baptism* has been shewn *universally* to prevail,

it manifestly was) every one sees the wide the vast difference; and must confess the impossibility of so universally corrupting the Apostolic doctrine and practice of baptising *only* the adult, if any such there had been; and of foisting in, throughout the whole world, *Infant Baptism* in its stead.

So that, upon the whole, it appears a clear and a very strongly attested Fact—That the practice of baptising of Infants was primitive and apostolic; and that the first Christian churches were every where formed and established upon this scheme.

But the Examples of scripture baptism, our brethren are wont to urge, are all on their side.—This is confidently, indeed, asserted; but upon a closer examination will be found a manifest mistake. There being not, in the whole scripture, ONE single instance of the Baptism for which they plead, and which is practised amongst them, viz. *that those who are born of Christian parents, are to be suffered to become adult before they are baptised.*—This, it is to be observed carefully, is the point in question betwixt us. As for the case of *adult proselytes*, or converts to christianity, *these*, we all agree, are not to be baptised 'till they personally profess faith. The scripture instances therefore of such proselytes, baptised upon such profession, are of no pertinence nor weight at all in the controversy before us: for *these* are exactly consonant to our sentiments and practice. The only point in debate is—*what is to be done with the Infants of these proselytes?*—Are they to be baptised with their parents?—Or; are they to be let alone 'till they become adult, and then be baptised upon their personal profession? This latter, our brethren say; but have not in the whole scripture, I again affirm it, *one instance* of such practice; no, nor any shadow or appearance of it. Their boasts, therefore of scripture instances, precedents, examples, are meer sound, and nothing

thing else. Whereas the instance of *Lydia*, Acts xvi. 14, 15. (not to mention *Stephanas* and the *jaylor*) strongly favours our practice; whose faith alone is mentioned, and, immediately it is added, *her household were baptised*.

The RELIGIOUS or MORAL purposes of Infant-Baptism.

IF it be asked—what are the *moral* purposes of this Baptism of Infants? or, of what real *benefit* or *use* in religion? It were sufficient to reply—of the same benefit and use as *Infant-circumcision* was; which is acknowledged to have been enjoined by God, and practised by his church, for more than *two thousand years*.—But I add; it is of great moral benefit; as it is both a solemn *vow* or *dedication* on our part, and a gracious *condescension* and *promise* on God's.

FIRST. It is a solemn *vow* or *dedication* on our part. For, herein, the religious parent publickly *recognises* his own covenant with God: binds himself by a sacred promise to watch over the immortal soul, now committed to his charge, and to train it up in a religious manner; and devotes first *himself*, and then his *helpless Infant*, to the divine patronage and care. By being baptised into the *Name*, the child is solemnly given up to the dominion and favour, and is received as the peculiar property, the subject and charge, of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.*

And

* *Baptising in* (or *into*) the *name*—signifies, commanding a person to the peculiar *blessing* and *patronage* of him, or them, in whose *name* he is baptised. Thus, when the form of solemn benediction is prescribed, Numb. vi. 23...*The LORD bless thee, and keep thee, &c.* It is added—*And they shall put MY NAME upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.*

And to one who well considers, into what a world of various difficulties, temptations and sins, his Infants are born; how every age and path of life is beset with dangers and snares; and what consequences, of awful moment, depend upon the *manner* in which they pass the present state—to him that considers this, it cannot but appear an inestimable privilege to be permitted to give them up, in this solemn manner, to the gracious protection and conduct of heaven.

The sentiments of a *religious* parent, on such an occasion, may be thus expressed.—“I acknowledge,
“ Almighty God, with the greatest thankfulness and joy,
“ thine absolute right in me, and in all that is mine.
“ This child, whicr thou hast given me, I receive as
“ from thine hand. It is *thine*, for thou has formed
“ it, and redeemed it by the blood of thine only be-
“ gotten son. To *thee* therefore I now solemnly
“ devote and give it up: to be guarded by thy provi-
“ dence; ministered to by thine *angels*; influenced by
“ thy SPIRIT; conducted safe through the many dan-
“ gers and evils of this present world; and to be pre-
“ served to thine everlasting kingdom and glory in
“ the other.

“ For ever blessed be thy name, that as *by one man's offence*, JUDGMENT came upon all to condemnation
“ and death; even so *by the righteousness of one*, the
“ FREE GIFT comes upon all to justification of life.
“ That as the fatal effects of the first Adam's sin extend
“ to our Infant-offspring, subjecting them to pain, to
“ misery, and death; so, the salutary effects of the
“ second ADAM's righteousness extend also to *these*,
“ raising them to glory, to happiness and life.—

“ I render unfeigned thanks, that the blessings of
“ redemption and of the covenant of grace, reach also to
“ them. That thou hast COMMANDED that little
“ children be brought into thy presence, to receive thy
“ solemn

"solemn benediction, and hast declared them to belong
"to thy family and kingdom. That the *baptismal water*
"is appointed as a standing monument of thy favour
"and gracious acceptance of them? and that by this
"figure is represented thy readiness to pour down
"thy spirit upon our seed, and thy blessing upon our off-
"spring.*—Lord I believe! I most thankfully accept
"this liberty which is given me. I here bring my
"helpless Infant, commanding it to God, and the power
"of his grace. Oh take it into thy family, and into
"the arms of thy love! Pour down thy blessings on
"it; and write its name in the book of life! May it
"be sanctified from the womb: consecrated a chosen
"vessel, fitted for thy service! May thy Spirit descend
"upon, and dwell continually in it, as a new principle of
"life; gradually rectifying the disorders of its nature;
"rooting out the seeds of vanity and folly which may
"spring up in its heart; enlightening its understand-
"ing, strengthening its moral powers, purifying and
"controlling its appetites and passions; and forming
"it into a living temple and habitation of God!

"Guard and preserve the life, which thou hast thus
"graciously bestowed! Conduct it through the dangers
"of childhood and youth! Spare it, if it be thy will,
"to be a blessing to its friends; and a burning and a
"shining light, amidst a dark and corrupt world! As
"it grows in years, may it continually grow in grace,
"in wisdom, and in virtue, and in favour with God
"and men! Grant me ever to walk before it with a
"wise and perfect heart; to bring it up in the fear and
"in the nurture of the Lord: And so faithfully to
"discharge my duty, in every respect towards it, that
"I may at last meet it with joy at thy kingdom and
"appearance, and with triumph then say—Behold me,
"and the child which thou hast given me!"

And

* Isaiah xlvi. 3.

And as it is thus a solemn vow and dedication on our part: so it is

SECONDLY. A most gracious condescension and promise on GOD's. It is a token of his covenant; a memorial or sign that he graciously accepts both the religious parent and his child, and *that HE WILL BE THEIR GOD.* By this rite he assures us, that as, in the wisdom of his providence, he *treats Infants as sinners,* through the transgression of *Adam;* so, in the riches of his grace, he had opened a fountain for their cleansing: will *treat them as righteous* through the obedience of *CHRIST:* and will give them his *SPIRIT* to quicken, regenerate and raise them to life. Of this *SPIRIT* the *baptismal water* is the appointed emblem or sign; and by commanding it to be poured on them he virtually says—

"Suffer the LITTLE CHILDREN to come unto me, and forbid them not: for THESE also I account as subjects of my moral kingdom, and as a part of that church, or chosen society, over whom I will exercise a peculiar providence and care."

"And the child, which the pious parent has thus devoted to me, I deliver back to him again: with a solemn charge that he ever, henceforth, consider it as my property. Train it up as for my service. Teach it early principles of Christian knowledge and virtue. Pray daily with, and for it. Set before it a good example: and watch over it as one who must shortly give account, to the great Shepherd when he shall appear. So, only, mayest thou hope that it will be thy comfort and delight in this world; and thy joy, and everlasting crown of rejoicing, in the other."

These are some of the pious sentiments, which the Baptism of an Infant naturally suggests. Considered in this light, it appears to be of great moral benefit: a most rational and proper service, or act of religion. It manifestly tends to enlarge and to confirm a Christians's
faith

faith and hope in God, with regard to his helpless child—to give a clearer and more extensive view of the great scheme of *redemption*—to render parents more *faithful, more diligent, and serious* in the education of their children; if their lives are continued: and if they are taken from them, it affords the noblest *support and consolation* in their death.

I here beg leave to add—that there is a vast difference in the *genius* and *temper* of children, even in their most *early years*, every one sees. What influence the **DIVINE SPIRIT** has in forming the *human mind*, even in its *Infant state*; and moulding it into a *preparation* for future usefulness and virtue—We cannot certainly say. Probably very great: for *John*, it is said *Luke i. 15. was filled with the HOLY GHOST from his mother's womb*. The prophet *Isaiah* was *called and formed from the womb*, to be a peculiar messenger of heaven to instruct and reclaim the people. *Isa. xl ix. 1, 2, 5.* And of *Jeremy* it is said, *before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.* *Jer. i. 5.*

It is then, a rational act of worship; for parents, from the very *dawn* and *first beginnings* of life, to devote their children to God, and to the peculiar influences of his spirit. And it is a very merciful and wise appointment, surely, if God has instituted any *rite*, or *sacrament* of religion, in which believing parents are *commanded* thus to dedicate their Infants to him; and in which he gives them a solemn *token* that he will pour out his spirit and blessing on them. This is done in *Baptism*. The water poured upon them, being an apt and proper *emblem* of his readiness to hear the prayers of the pious parent, and to give his *spirit* to the child—to preside

over, and assist, its intellectual and moral powers—to form it to a love of virtue—and to fit and pre-dispose it for usefulness in future life.*

Upon the whole then we conclude—that it being an undoubted privilege of the *Christian* dispensation, as it was of both the *Abrahamic* and *Mosaic* of old, that the *Infants of Believers* † should be taken, together with themselves, into covenant with God: it becomes us with great thankfulness, to accept of this favour; to dedicate our *children*, as well as *ourselves*, in this solemn manner to him; and thus publickly to declare—that **WE, and OUR HOUSEHOLD, will serve the LORD.**

* Mr. *Tomb*, the learned Antipedobaptist, acknowledges that the grace of God may put Infants into Christ, and unite them to him by his spirit. Vid. *Examen.* §. 10. Suppose, says one, there were a *Master*, who had the secret of pre-disposing the brain in order to future learning, or of giving a principle or power of future knowledge; would it not be a very reasonable and desirable thing to put Infants under his management; and might they not thenceforward be counted scholars, or *disciples*, to him, though not yet actually taught?

† By *Infants of Believers*, are not to be understood only their natural offspring; but any Infants which are their property, or members of their household, or for whose religious education they will solemnly undertake. Thus, not only Abraham's own children, but all born in his house, or bought with his money, he was commanded to circumcise. *Gen. xvii. 13.* So when Lydia, the jaylor, and Stephanas were baptised, it is particularly observed, that their households were baptised with them. *Foundling Infants*, therefore, are very rationally brought to *Baptism*, by those who will engage solemnly for their *Christian* education.

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F. I N I S.

